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THE CRAYON.

NEW YORK, MAY 28, 1855.

THE importance of our correspondence this week, has compelled us to give up to it one page of our "Sketchings," which, however, we shall reclaim next week.

Sketchings.

HARTFORD possesses a permanent gallery of the Fine Arts. It is located in a building known as the Wadsworth Athenæum, one of the finest structures in the town, and well situated on the main street. Without knowing the entire history of this building, it is sufficient to say that the ground on which it stands was the gift of the gentleman whose name it bears, and the edifice upon it was erected by subscription mainly, we believe, to accommodate the present collection of pictures, and secure to Hartford a public gallery of the Fine Arts. Very creditable to Hartford is such an institution—the town does not possess one more so. The citizens may well be proud of it, as it gives Hartford a rank which few places in this country can aspire to; for an institution devoted to the Fine Arts is a mark of enlightenment and progress, and is a bond of sympathy with the refined and pure of the earth, which exists in no other public form, and no people, however civilized they may be, can be called enlightened until a feeling for Art shall be as strikingly manifest as a care for physical necessities is—until by the side of every class of asylums, a Gallery of Art be erected to keep them company.

The exhibition Hall of the Wadsworth Athenæum is a fine room, spacious and well lighted; there are a number of pictures upon its walls, and many of special interest. Among them are six landscapes by Cole, five being small, and among his earliest works, the sixth being a view of Mount Etna from Taormina. The latter is a large landscape, and remarkable on account of its having been painted in about a week's time; it is, in fact, little else than a gigantic sketch. The subject of the picture is a grand one and quite effective, produced as it is upon the large canvas which such a magnificent mountain seems to require; it illustrates Cole's feeling and power, and is one of the most interesting pictures painted by him during the latter part of his life.

Col. Trumbull is represented by a couple of landscape views of Niagara, and one portrait, also, four of his battle pieces, copied by him from the originals at New Haven. We use the word *copied* instead of *painted*, for notwithstanding he painted them, they are but very poor copies of his own work: they possess no interest as works of Art, but are not without some, as being the labor of his hand. It would have been better for the reputation of Col. Trumbull, if he had never repeated his pictures, particularly as both repetitions—those at Washington and these at Hartford—are doubtless seen by more persons than the exquisite miniature originals are, at the Trumbull Gallery in

New Haven, and consequently his artistic excellence is not recognized. The latter, however, proves him to have been a man of genius, which no one believes standing before the Hartford and Washington pictures, if they never saw the originals.

In addition to the above, the Athenæum possesses the fine full-length portrait of Benjamin West, by Sir Thomas Lawrence. This picture formerly belonged to the American Academy of the Fine Arts, in New York, and ought never to have been allowed to leave that city. There is a good head by Rembrandt there. One of the interesting Art-features of the Gallery is an original miniature portrait, in crayon, of Washington, and one of Mrs. Washington, both by Sharpless. Church has a landscape, the subject of it relating to the early settlement of Hartford, and Ives a bust called Meekness. There is, also, an immense picture by Wiche-low, called The Destruction of Jerusalem, a class of pictures which should never have a place anywhere except in an immense gallery, for when room is wanted for better works, there is no garret large enough to stow away such productions, and "it seems a pity to destroy them!"

Citizens of Hartford, do not neglect the Art-Gallery of the Wadsworth Athenæum! Procure works of Art and be choice in your selection. A little effort will secure to your city in its Art-Gallery a unique and valuable object of interest, and it will reflect honor upon you, for works of Art being symbolic of a love for the true and the beautiful, their abiding place will be loved and respected accordingly.

To the Editors of the Crayon.

In the paper of May 9th, in defining the term *genre*, you say, "The essential characteristic of *genre* seems to be that it treats of the external character of men, or of mere forms and draperies in many cases;" and you instance Teniers, Wilkie, Leslie, &c., as painters of pictures of this description. Now, it is generally thought that the above-named painters display the most consummate knowledge of human Nature in their works, and I think that *character* is the most essential requisite of *genre* painting, and also the one that is most generally fulfilled. That part of your definition of *genre* above quoted, would apply with more propriety to still-life painting.

We believe that our correspondent has not found us at fault in the definition we gave of *genre*. We said, and we still think, justly, that it treats of *external* character in contradistinction to the inner life and nature of mankind. What is Teniers, who is, perhaps, the subtlest of those mentioned, but a painter of "human Nature," as developed in the pot-house? And what is Leslie, but a painter of the external man, as he appears under the superficial incitements of social life, of gentlemen and ladies, or, it may be, of pedants and rustics? Is there an instance of either of the artists we mentioned awaking to the perception of a grand sentiment, a generous passion, or a religious aspiration? Is not their "consummate knowledge of human Nature" simply perception of "external character?" Have they prayed with Fra Angelico, philosophized with Scheffer

on the attributes of the soul, or with Titian and Rubens on the outer world—or have they been rapt into the mighty frenzy of Buonarrotti? If none of these, then, what are they but external?

But, when we say they are none of these, we must not be understood as speaking lightly of them. We have not used the term *genre* as one of contempt. In fact, it seems to us that *genre* compares with what is commonly known as high Art, much as talent does with genius, and they often run so nearly together, that it is difficult to draw a line of distinction between. Talent is, however, not to be disparaged because it is not genius, any more than a dog because he is not a lion—the fault lies, if anywhere, in his endeavoring to appear a lion, the while he is a dog. *Genre* has a very important field to fill—and, while occupying it, it receives so much of our approbation, that we never think it is not high Art; but, if it aspires to be thought that which it is not, we perceive its folly at once.

So, there is no decided distinction between still-life and *genre* painting: we apply the former term to the representation of inanimate objects—when, in fact, it is strictly as applicable to many pictures which aspire to human interest, and which we call by courtesy only, *genre* pictures.

THE LATE EXHIBITION.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—The Academy's exhibition has closed; the people have had their look, and the critics their "say"; the pictures are scattered—the sweet, the noble ones, and all—and they will never more be gathered. A few of them I may meet in picture-dealers' rooms, in studios, or on parlor walls, but the most of them I shall never behold again. It is a very sad thought, for not a few of the paintings have grown familiar and dear to me; but they have left happy memories, and you must let me breathe these a little through your serene journal. It will be a blest relief to me thus to give voice to my happiness, and acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

I feel much, but I know little or nothing about Art. To be sure, I paint sometimes, in a quiet way; I have an Art corner in my library—a few profound treatises and hand-books, over which I knit my brows very perseveringly, now and then; and I shily and closely examine paintings, often, with a shy, doubtful, yet pleasant hope of stealing a secret or two of their production. But, after all, the whole subject is a mystery—in truth, is more so the more I try to study and practice. I am content it should be so; my wisdom is to snugly enjoy a good thing, without much painful philosophizing. It must be quite distressing to know so much about Art as many of the critics do.

Ah, those terrible fellows! I glance about always, in exhibition rooms, in a nervous apprehension of running against one of them. Are they peaceably disposed in company? Do they look and act as they write? Do they wear slouched hats over fiery eyes, and grim beards and moustaches? Do they go about with firmly set teeth, and with one hand in the breast, grasping a poisoned stiletto? Do they rush into their rooms, thrust pens violently into inkstands, and splash and spatter their paper at a fearful rate? Do they frighten servants by ringing fiercely for John, to take a criticism to the printer?

The young lady "wouldn't be a nun," in the song. But I wouldn't be a critic. It is all very well for you, Messrs. Editors, who seem to have

much quiet knowledge, and can calmly tell it—it is well for you to conduct an Art-journal. But those terrible fellows in the newspapers! How uncomfortable to have so vast ideas and rapid thoughts—to be internally thundering and flashing all the while, with so sudden, stunning decisions about pictures and questions of Art—to have a hundred such phrases as “truth,” “handling,” “feeling for color,” knocking about in one’s brain! And how wretched to have all the cares and interests of American Art weighing heavily upon one’s critical shoulders! It must be more harassing than the cares of state to a forlorn king or a miserable president.

I love rather to dream over Beauty, drinking it in at every sense and pore, and storing my soul with its lovely forms. I could describe to you half the pictures of the late exhibition—every one that sent even a single ray of beauty to my heart—could even draw the patterns of some of their gilt mouldings. They are transferred to the endless gallery of memory. And my dog-eared, crumpled catalogue—that, as usual, is preserved as fondly as an old love-letter, to recall any glimpse of happiness that may fade. And so I dream over the exhibition—ascend in fancy the dark stairway, enter the small cavern of a room, with its weird light, and the mysterious janitress, who seems to me a mythological personage—a Muse or Grace in disguise—regularly appearing and vanishing from the earth every year, and reminding me that “the earth hath bubbles, as the water hath.” And then the dashing crayon heads, the charming large and little sketches,—I shall recognize the “Drovers” and all the characters, if ever I meet them in life; the grand little Scottish stories, also, the cabinet groups—I still see the tiny blubbery boy who tumbled into the snow, and the naughty dog who spilled the children’s milk. Then, too, the *crewel*-foliaged saw-mill piece, and the queer old man in pink robes by an odd sea-shore, hanging in the deep shadow on the Broadway side of the room—from what funny planet were these pictures sent, and how did they get them here? If ever I exhibit, I wish my picture hung in that room, so as to give all men—especially the critics—the joy of discovering my merit, and dragging it forth from obscurity, bringing it to light, and crowning over it, as antiquarians do over a gem found in a mouldy tomb, or children at a bird’s nest espied under the bushes.

But the large room! I shall stroll slowly around and around it, in fancy, all the year, and years hence. To think of all the tenderly beautiful, the stately, the venerable, the plump and jolly, the prim and droll portraits—all the subjects dressed in their best, and looking their best, and I privileged to stare at them and ponder over them, without rudeness, or without myself being stared out of countenance! The *genre* pictures, likewise (which word my French Dictionary makes the confusion of worse confounded by informing me that it is pronounced *hjangre*) can I ever forget the Shakesperian characters, or the bereaved fisherman, or Pompey directing the smiling, smoking Mynheer, or my rustic friends from Slabtown—Ike, Mike, Jake and Zeke—whom Mr. Oertel invited into his studio to see his picture of “The Soul,” I presume. What did they say of it?

But the landscapes! I love them best, and I know every leaf, rock and cloud of many of them. What, if some of them appear fantastic? I have a friend who cannot distinguish crimson from green; and how know I that color is not merely relative—that each artist has not painted what he saw? I thank them all for telling me how things seem to them. I thank them for letting me travel thousands of miles in a few moments, among gorgeous tropical blooms, snowy mountains, roaring cataracts, sweet New England lakes, noble forests, wintry wilds, lonely sea-shores, or along green meadows with sunny lights and luminous shad-

ows. And as for the queer landscapes, I am glad to have visited Mars, Jupiter and the Moon, where I have no doubt these were faithfully painted. Most soberly and heartily do I thank all the artists—some of them inexpressibly. Twenty-five or fifty cents is little enough for the ticket of admission. The poorest people often spend that for empty shows and trifles.

Yours sincerely,

HUMBLE BEE.

A RAMBLE TO THE SUMMIT OF TINKER MOUNTAIN, ROANOKE COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

I HAD long wished for something like a fine spring day to ascend to the top of Tinker Mountain, the view from which, of the broad valley below, and the surrounding mountains, I could easily imagine to be of the grand style of picturesque beauty. This mountain is 900 feet in height from its base, and 1,800 from the level of the sea, and forms a most prominent feature in the landscape for many miles around. To a person approaching it from the road, it bears a close resemblance to some huge animal rising from his repose; and, in the early morning, when he heaves to the sun his wet, shining shoulders, with a drapery of rolling clouds below him, he really seems to be alive, and conscious of his fine appearance. He is then sitting for his portrait; and the pencil of the artist would be nobly employed in transferring to the canvas his broad and massive lineaments.

An interesting tradition is intimately connected with this locality, from which both the mountain, and the stream which flows at its foot, derive their respective names of Tinker Mountain and Tinker Creek. The association of so unsylvan a name with such wild, majestic scenery, seems to be extremely inappropriate, perhaps ludicrous; and a laudable curiosity is naturally provoked as to the origin of an appellation so practical. Here are overhanging masses of rocks which seem at any moment ready to leap from their places, crowned with tall pines, through which the untamed winds often sweep with the noise of a troubled ocean—all rejoicing in a name suggestive of nothing but the click of a gipsy’s hammer against a broken coffee-pot. In poetic indignation we ask, whose odd whim could conceive, and connect with such sublimity, a term so charged with an antidote for rhapsody—a term which, as here applied, tells of nothing but the stolidity of the mind that originated it, yet is fastened to its object with a tenacity which has outlived its very oddity? These thoughts pass involuntarily through the mind, but are readily satisfied on an inquiry in the neighborhood; and the following facts which here found “a local habitation and a name,” add considerable interest to a scene which, before, only demanded our admiration.

It appears that, many years ago, an old man who followed the trade of a travelling tinker, in his lonely rambles in search of employment, was struck with the peculiar solitude of a spot which he at once determined to make his abode. It is not known whether he sought this seclusion for the sake of an eccentric philosophy which prompted him to meditation, or whether the abundance of fish in the stream suggested an easy means of obtaining food. At any rate, he lived here for several years in his quiet hermitage, never going abroad unless to earn, in an honest way, the expense of the few necessities of life. But the old man was not destined to enjoy long his peaceable repose.

Shut out as he was from the world, he was not beyond the reach of envy; for it was thought by the few persons who were aware of his existence, that he was the possessor of much money obtained through years of patient toil, and which he even yet increased by a severe economy. He had withdrawn himself to the woods where, in fancied security, he satisfied a miser’s propensity in calculating his treasure.

This belief amounted to such certainty in the mind of a straggling hunter, whom ill fortune had rendered somewhat desperate, that he determined to reconnoitre the old man’s premises, and enrich himself with his property. He accordingly repaired thither one night, and requested the tinker to mend his rifle, which he pretended was out of order. He noted carefully the few articles of rude furniture, and his eager attention was particularly attracted to an old chest upon which the hermit sat, he having given up to his unusual guest, or rather customer, the low chair which he himself usually occupied. The hunter’s willing imagination immediately filled this chest with gold, and he seemed already to possess the wealth which he thought the old man was endeavoring both with his body and social conversation to conceal. He was confirmed in this last idea by the tinker’s refusing payment for the job, on account of the trifling injury to the gun, and his remarking that he was not just then in want of money. They then parted company, the one to enjoy a sound sleep, while the other prepared for his destruction by loading his rifle, and resolving to wait until daylight should make his aim sure. He then climbed a tall sycamore, with the intention of dispatching his victim as soon as he issued from the door in the morning.

As was his wont, the tinker rose with the sun, and opened his door to greet a glorious day, when the sharp crack of a rifle echoed among the rocks above, and he lay stretched in death, forming the threshold over which his murderer hurriedly stepped to seize the contents of the tempting chest. To his frantic astonishment it contained only a few simple tools, an old Bible, and a pair of iron spectacles! The chagrin of the wretch was such that he snatched the Sacred Book, and with it kindled a flame which soon reduced the house and its despised contents to ashes. Fearing that the perforated skull would some day be found, and lead to a suspicion of the foul deed, he buried the corpse, and then left in awful disgust the scene of his disappointment. The wretched man died shortly afterwards, the victim of a conscience which allowed no rest, and on his death-bed confessed his horrid crime, not omitting the slightest incident.

On our way we found a small log-cabin at the foot of the mountain, which we ascertained from its inhabitant was built nearly on the site formerly occupied by the old tinker. We were also informed that, a few years ago, in digging a well, he had encountered, just below the surface of the ground, a portion of a skull, and an arm-bone. The track left by the bullet from the top of the head was apparent, showing the deliberate aim and elevation of the death-dealing instrument. These remains were carefully re-interred at the end of the garden, where a small tumulus designates the *last* resting-place of a man whose name has long since passed into oblivion, but whose sad memory is closely linked with a locality which he made his own.

After leaving this house, we commenced the steep and fatiguing ascent, and while resting on a fallen tree that crossed our path, our dogs, Nero and Romeo, dragged a number of very young rabbits from their nest, but we rescued the little family, not, however, until one of them was killed by Nero, who, true to his name, would, on this occasion, have relished the cruelty of his name-sake.

We reached the summit in a heated state, and while undergoing the process of cooling, on a ledge of flat rocks, we scanned the wide landscape. The valley, although quite hilly, appeared from this height as a level plain, it being now about noon, and, consequently, there was not shadow enough to show its real inequalities. A line of low hills on our left gradually led the eye from the basin to the distant mountains beyond, commencing with a large, uncouth knob, a few rather blunt peaks, and then

stretching completely around the horizon with an undulating outline, interrupted occasionally by sharp points, and finally terminating on our extreme left with a fine view of the Peaks of Otter.

The air was perfectly calm, and the still scene was wholly undisturbed except by a solitary buzzard whose form would be now almost lost among the foliage below, and presently, with a broad sweep, emerge and climb the haze and sunshine,—seeming to form with his graceful evolutions, the connecting links between earth and sky.

We scoured the mountain from one end to the other, forcing our way through scrub-oaks and low pines, catching glimpses of landscape at every turn, thus enjoying a picture-gallery furnished with gems by the great painter—Nature.

While descending, we stopped near the summit to bask on some rocks by a small trickling spring, whose regular dripping was sufficient to remind one of thirst, but not to satisfy it. While resting at this spot, after moistening our tongues, a blue-throated lizard suddenly made his appearance on the smooth edge of a rock, for the purpose of lubricating his joints, and warning his cold body in the genial sunshine, and straightway, with my usual fondness for the innocent reptile, I determined to possess myself of this specimen, if I could, in order to examine his features. The lizard, however, seemed to understand me, and exhibited a cunning that completely frustrated my intentions; for, with the most provoking nimbleness, he would barely evade my grasp, slipping quickly around the rock, while my hand descended on the spot just occupied. Seeming by this playfulness to invite my further efforts, I procured a dry stick, and ascertained that he would bear tickling. Thus encouraged, I reached again and yet again, but to no purpose, and even called him pet names, thinking that if he would not be grabbed, he might be wheedled, but the expressive twitching of his head convinced me that my diplomacy was too well understood; and I desisted, thanking the reptile for the lesson he taught me, of hope not to be realized.

We now descended, passing on our way through a clearing used as a tobacco-field, which makes an unsightly patch on the side of the mountain, and reached the "Springs" with stiffened sinews and a hearty appetite, well pleased with our long anticipated ramble on Tinker's mountain

*Botelourt Springs, Roanoke Co.,
Va., April, 1855*

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